



Smart Consumer Guide

Consumer Services

W A S H I N G T O N



UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Since 1905, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) has protected the public interest by ensuring that utility and transportation services are fairly priced, widely available, reliable and safe.

In achieving this mission, the UTC provides a range of regulatory services for privately held or investor-owned companies and their customers, including setting rates, enforcing service quality and safety standards, and resolving customer disputes.

This booklet is designed to lay out the services that the UTC has to offer to consumers in dealing with regulated utility and transportation companies. For additional help or information, call the commission toll free at 1(800)562-6150.

About UTC



The UTC is led by a three-member commission, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state

senate for staggering six-year terms. Under state law, no more than two commissioners can belong to the same political party.

Commissioners are prohibited from having any additional employment or business during their term in office and cannot hold or acquire stock or other kind of financial interest in the companies they regulate.

The UTC regulates only privately held or investor-owned companies that offer services to the public. These include:

- Electricity and natural gas companies
- Telephone companies
- Investor-owned water companies
- Non-municipal garbage service
- Bus companies operating in-state
- Household goods movers
- Private ferries and excursion boats
- Natural gas pipelines
- Railroad crossings

The UTC does **not** regulate any service that is publicly owned or contracted by a city or town. The UTC also does **not** have authority over cellular phone companies, cable or Internet providers, which are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Consumer Services

Answer Department. Our consumer specialists can answer your questions and help you be a smarter consumer of utility services. For example, they'll tell you how to read your electricity meter or how to make sense out of your phone bill.

Dispute Resolution and Complaints. If you are unable to resolve a dispute with a regulated company, our trained mediators can help. You can file your complaint by phone, in writing or with an electronic complaint form over the Internet at www.wutc.wa.gov/consumer.





Fair Prices. Where customer choice in utility services is limited, the UTC provides oversight of rates and services, requiring that

customers be informed of any proposed changes. In determining whether a change is appropriate, the UTC is guided by the legal standard that rates should be fair, just, reasonable and sufficient.

Your Participation Welcome. In making its decisions on rates, services and policies, the UTC welcomes your comments. You could share your thoughts with the commission, either in person at a regularly scheduled public meeting, in writing or by filling out a comment form at the agency's web page: www.wutc.wa.gov/consumer.

Written comments are read by staff and become part of the official record. You can also ask to be put on UTC mailing lists for any issues of interest to you.

Documents related to commission work are maintained in our records center and are

available for public inspection and copying. For more information on how to acquire copies of specific records, call the records center at (360)664-1234.

Publications. The UTC publishes brochures and fact sheets about telecommunications, energy, water, solid waste and transportation services. You may request documents by phone or in writing or access directly our on-line library by going to the Consumer page at the UTC web site and selecting the Publications page.

Web Site. You may obtain or view brochures, public meeting agendas, and legal briefings filed by companies, as well as staff memos and reports on important utility and transportation issues. The web site has thousands of documents and links to other related sites.

Newsletters. We mail out a free newsletter quarterly that features consumer-oriented articles on utilities, energy and transportation issues.



To receive the *UTC News&Views* call the Consumer Hotline.



Speakers Bureau. We have speakers who can come to your

organization or school and give you the latest on issues relating to telephones, electricity, solid waste and transportation, and on how to be a smart utility consumer. Call the UTC Consumer Hotline to arrange a speaker.

Rail Safety. The UTC's rail program monitors railroad speeds and inspects public-railroad crossings as part of a statewide effort to ensure that high-speed rail service does not come at the expense of public safety. The UTC also is an active partner in Operation Lifesaver—an entertaining program designed to appeal to anyone from toddlers to senior citizens. Operation Lifesaver warns about the dangers associated with crossing or trespassing onto railroad right-of-ways. Call the Consumer Hotline to arrange a presentation for your group.

Pipeline Safety. The UTC operates a federally funded program that reviews the installation and maintenance of pipelines which carry natural gas and petroleum products. This public safety program is designed to reduce the threat of explosions and hazardous liquid spills.



Notes

How to contact UTC

For Consumer Services

1(800)562-6150 (toll free)

Main Phone Number

(360)664-1160

Web Site

www.wutc.wa.gov

Email

For consumer complaints:
complaints@wutc.wa.gov

For general information:
info@wutc.wa.gov

Mailing Address

Washington UTC
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Location

1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive SW
Olympia, Washington

For an alternative format of this brochure,
call (360)664-1133 or TTY: (360)586-8203.



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